

Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission Plc,
Scottish and Southern Electricity Network,
Per: Sarah Lashley,
200 Dunkeld Road,
Perth,
PH1 3AQ
sarah.lashley2@sse.com

Please ask for: Roddy Dowell
Email: roddy.dowell@highland.gov.uk
Our Ref: 24/01648/SCRE
Date: 13 November 2024

Dear Ms Lashley,

ELECTRICITY ACT 1989. THE ELECTRICITY WORKS (ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT) (SCOTLAND) REGULATIONS 2017.

REQUEST FOR SCREENING OPINION FOR 400KV SUBSTATION COMPRISING NEW BUILDINGS, PLATFORM, PLANT AND MACHINERY, ACCESS, LAYDOWN/WORK COMPOUND AREA(S), DRAINAGE, LANDSCAPING, AND OTHER ANCILLARY WORKS (NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT).

LOCATION: LAND 1700M SE OF GLASHA, TOMICH, CANNICH.

I refer to the above proposed development and to your request, dated 19 April 2024, for a Screening Opinion under The Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 (hereafter referred to as “the 2017 Regulations”).

Screening Opinion

It is considered that an **Environmental Impact Assessment is NOT required** for the development described in the letter and information accompanying your screening request.

The rationale behind this screening opinion is as follows:

1. The proposal does not constitute Schedule 1 development under the 2017 Regulations; but
2. The proposal does fall within the definition of “Schedule 2 development” for the construction of a substation including platform extension, erection of new substation buildings along with associated plant, infrastructure and associated ancillary development which exceed the area of 0.5 hectare.
3. Having screened it against the selection criteria outlined in Schedule 3 (including cumulative impact, pollution, impact on natural resources/the natural environment,

environmental quality and the historic environment), and following further input from NatureScot and SEPA, the potential impact on the receiving environment is not considered to be significant because of the localised nature of the impact.

SEPA Comments

SEPA initially raised concerns regarding the potential detrimental impact on peat and watercourses at the design workshop meeting on 25 July 2024, following on from the applicant utilising the Highland Council's major preapplication advice service on 21 November 2023. The applicant submitted a draft Peat Management Plan (dated 14 August 2024) for SEPA's review on 6 September 2024.

In terms of peat, SEPA note the finalised Peat Management Plan to be submitted with the future planning application shall outline all infrastructure overlaid on a peat depth map. SEPA expect further reduction in peat volumes removed from the site to support NPF4 mitigation hierarchy. They noted the reuse of any excavated peat and the acceptability of its reuse will require further clarification and discussion with other consultees such as NatureScot and Forestry and Land Scotland. Dependant on that further clarification, SEPA state that a Waste Management Licence may be required if the removal of peat is deemed as waste disposal. Likewise, the proposed artificial bund for borrow pit restoration may not be acceptable for these reasons.

In terms of watercourses, SEPA note that no infrastructure should impact the natural watercourse south of the proposed substation platform which is a tributary to Allt an Rathain. The Appendix of the draft Peat Management Plan shows the materials processing platform and new access track overlaid across this watercourse. SEPA consider this approach is unacceptable and the design and layout shall be amended as part of the future planning application to avoid any impact on the water environment with a 15m buffer from the watercourse required.

The comments above are summarised with the response from SEPA attached for reference.

Negative Screening Opinions

It is important to note that a negative screening opinion, i.e. one which states that EIA is not required, does not indicate that the proposed development will not have an adverse impact on the receiving environment. It merely constitutes an opinion that any impact is unlikely to be significant in terms of the criteria outlined in Schedule 3 of the Regulations.

It remains entirely possible that the proposed development may have an unacceptable impact, perhaps within a more localised area, and a negative screening opinion should not, therefore, be taken as an indication that there are no environmental issues and planning permission will automatically be forthcoming.

Alterations to the Development as Proposed

If the scale, character, location and/or impact potential of the proposed development changes at any point in future, a reassessment of the need for EIA may be required. You are therefore advised to contact us to discuss any alterations to the proposal at an early stage and prior to the submission of a planning application.

Additional Guidance and Considerations

You may also wish to read our own advice and guidance on renewable energy developments, copies of which are available via: http://www.highland.gov.uk/info/198/planning_-_long_term_and_area_policies/152/renewable_energy/2

ePlanning Centre: The Highland Council, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, IV3 5NX

Email/Post-d: eplanning@highland.gov.uk Web/Lion: www.highland.gov.uk

Ionad dDealbhaidh: Comhairle na Gàidhealtachd, Rathad Ghleann Urchadain, Inbhir Nis, IV3 5NX

Should you require any further information or clarification on any of the above, please do not hesitate to contact me via email in the first instance rodgy.dowell@highland.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,

Roddy Dowell
Principal Planner

Please Note: This screening opinion does not constitute pre-application planning advice. The merits of the proposed development have not been assessed, nor has its acceptability in terms of material planning considerations and development plan policy.